

Third Michigan Infantry. Between 1861 and 1865, 90,000 Michigan soldiers served in the Civil War.

Building Michigan's Economy

Known today as one of the world's greatest manufacturing centers and as a giant of the twentieth century industrial world, Michigan derived almost all of its economic strength in its earlier years from its natural resources, which propelled Michigan to the lead among the states in several key enterprises, including mining, lumbering, and agriculture.

Michigan's first enterprise was the **fur trade**. This activity was important to the development of the interior of the entire continent. Fur trading was a factor behind the hostilities that took place in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For many years, Mackinac Island was the regional center for the fur trade. Michigan furs helped German immigrant John Jacob Astor become America's first millionaire.

From the days when unknown Native American tribes mined it and when the first European explored the region, copper seemed a readily available resource awaiting development. Both the British and the French expressed interest in reports of copper. The British made some attempts to mine it, but, due to the remoteness of the region and greater interest in furs, never successfully pursued mining. **Dr. Douglass Houghton**, Michigan's first state geologist, noted the availability of this mineral in his 1841 report on the state's resources. Stories of the Ontonagon Boulder, a huge chunk of pure copper four feet long, three and one-half feet wide, and one and one-half feet hick, and the publicity created by reports of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and others led to renewed interest in **copper mining**. By the mid-1840s, a copper boom was in the making, creating the country's first mineral rush. Many companies were established, and some mines yielded remarkable wealth. For forty years, until 1887, Michigan led the nation in the production of copper, and in many of those years produced more than one-half of the nation's supply.

About the same time, in 1844, rich **iron ore deposits** were discovered by surveyor William A. Burt in the Negaunee and Ishpeming area. From the 1850s until the turn of the century, Michigan was the nation's leader in iron ore production.

So important were the mineral riches of the Upper Peninsula that, in 1855, a remarkable engineering feat was completed, the construction of a **canal and locks along the St. Mary's River** at Sault Ste. Marie. The canal, operated by the state until it was turned over to the federal government in 1881, was financed by the sale of public land. The locks fostered growth in mining operations and facilitated the movement of essential minerals during the Civil War.

Michigan's most important economic activity was **agriculture**. The early dire warnings that Michigan soil could not support crops proved unfounded. Except for the farming activities of the Indians and the small "ribbon farms" of the French around the Detroit area, virtually the entire state remained uncultivated until the massive influx of New York and New England farmers in the 1820s and 1830s. As they penetrated the forest and cleared the land, the fertile quality of the southern Lower Peninsula became well known. Like most of the nation, Michigan's population was comprised of farmers.

The most important crop was wheat, and until the Great Plains gave way to the plow, Michigan was a national leader in this key crop. Michigan's unique combination of climate and soils was quickly noted by pioneer farmers, who began fruit production, especially apples and peaches, along Lake Michigan. Sugar beets and mint were also soon developed by the Michigan farmer.

Two areas of special interest in Michigan's agricultural development in the nineteenth century were the production of celery and the importance of cereals. In the Kalamazoo region, enterprising Dutch immigrants capitalized on the area's marshes and swamps to grow celery. Touting the healthful benefits of this crop put Kalamazoo celery on the nation's tables. In Battle Creek, noted health advocates Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and C. W. Post promoted the development of cereal products that eventually earned Battle Creek the nickname "Cereal City."

In 1855, the Legislature established the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan, the nation's pioneer land grant college. This college, now known as Michigan State University, required students to work on the school's farms as part of the curriculum and became an important contributor to farming and agricultural research.

One of the most famous and colorful activities of the nineteenth century was lumbering. The dense forests and ample river transportation provided a perfect combination for this enterprise. Lumbering became a large-scale industry after the Civil War and continued until approximately 1900. The harvest of Michigan's woodlands led the nation for many years and had a lasting influence on many communities, especially those affiliated with furniture manufacturing (Grand Rapids) or papermaking (Kalamazoo). Stories from the lumber camps constitute some of Michigan's richest folklore. Lumbering in Michigan had a strong national impact. For example, Michigan lumber largely rebuilt Chicago following its famous fire. Homes, barns, and fences throughout the Midwest were built with Michigan lumber. During peak years, Michigan produced one-fourth of the nation's lumber — almost equal to the production of the next three states combined. The total worth of Michigan's forests far exceeded the value derived from the famed gold rush of California.

During Michigan's lumbering boom, enormous capital was accumulated. Much of the capital later helped Michigan become a center for the automobile industry. However, the lumbering era also left its mark in less favorable ways. Fires occurred regularly, and in 1871 and 1881 Michigan was the site of some of the most severe and costly fires ever to ravage the country. The first disaster relief effort of the American Red Cross came in response to the 1881 fires.

A vital link in Michigan's economy was the availability of reliable transportation. During the nineteenth century, the stagecoach and canoe were supplanted by the railroad. Michigan embraced this new technology early. The first railroad chartered in the Northwest Territory was

the Pontiac and Detroit Railway Company (1830). The first track laid in the old Northwest Territory (between Adrian and Toledo) was the Erie and Kalamazoo, the most successful early railroad. However, not everyone was thrilled with the arrival of the "iron horse." Farmers were greatly concerned for their livestock, which were often killed. This led to incidents in Jackson county that became known as the "Great Railroad Conspiracy" of 1849-1851. At that time, farmers stopped and derailed trains. One incident resulted in a highly publicized trial that brought Senator William H. Seward of New York as an attorney for the defense. (Seward later gained fame as U.S. Secretary of State by purchasing Alaska). Later in the nineteenth century, conflict between railroad interests and agriculture was the focus of fierce battles in the Legislature. Since railroads were the way farmers transported their goods to market, there was considerable interest in how rates were determined. The regulation and taxation of railroads were major programs of Governor **Hazen S. Pingree** (1897-1900).



Good Intent Line opens stagecoach service to west Michigan.



Hermansville, Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula in 1892. This photo shows the aftermath of the clear-cut logging practices of the logging boom.

Conservation of Game and Resources

When first settled, Michigan was a pristine wilderness with abundant game, forests, and fish; however, it was not long before these resources were threatened by the onslaught of civilization. The saga of the passenger pigeon, a bird hunted to extinction in America during the nineteenth century, epitomized the potential consequences of uncontrolled hunting or fishing. It was reported that one million passenger pigeons were killed in a three-month period in 1878 near Petoskey. In addition, the effects of clear-cutting forestry practices demonstrated that even the most abundant resources were vulnerable. For many years, commercialized fishing and hunting operated freely. Deer were harvested in enormous quantities and fishing practices were so aggressive that they included using dynamite to take certain fish from streams.

Several efforts were made to deal with the rapidly disappearing game and fish. Hunting seasons were established, and other regulating measures attempted to protect certain animals, including swans, grayling, trout, and beaver. Enforcement of these restrictions, unfortunately, was difficult. In 1873, the **Board of Fish Commissioners** was established with an eye toward increasing the fish population through the use of hatcheries.

Michigan tried to cope with the problem of large-scale commercial hunting by prohibiting the taking of deer for consumption outside the state. In 1887, Michigan became a pioneer among the states in establishing the position of **Game Warden**. One of the early Game Wardens, Chase S. Osborn of Sault Ste. Marie, who served from 1895-1899, later served as governor (1911-1912).

Immigration and Human Resources

While much of Michigan's development and growth is associated with its natural resources, the key to this growth was the human resources that were needed to develop the mining, logging, agricultural, and industrial elements of the state's economy. Between 1860 and 1900, more than 700,000 immigrants came to Michigan, and nearly 400,000 of these new arrivals were born in foreign countries. In fact, the state began encouraging **immigrants** to settle in Michigan as early as 1845, when an Office of Foreign Emigration was established in New York. In early years, the Germans and Dutch were the most sought-after groups due to their strong religious beliefs, industriousness, and education. To increase immigration, the state's New York agent published a small pamphlet glorifying the virtues of the state. This type of promotion was to be repeated several times in Michigan and eventually in other states.

Following the success of this one-time venture, another agent was appointed to the post to continue the effort to attract Dutch and German settlers. He prepared a larger booklet which was also printed in German (The Emigrants Guide to the State of Michigan or Des Auswanderers Wegweiser nach dem Staate Michigan). This publication included more information about the state, including data on transportation, climate, agricultural and business opportunities, and matters of education, which were known to be important attractions for immigrants from Germany and the Netherlands. Thousands of these booklets were printed and the program proved to be a

The Civil War interrupted efforts to recruit new settlers, but in 1869, the governor appointed a commissioner of emigration to reside in Germany "... for the purpose of encouraging immigration to Michigan from German States and other countries of Europe." The agent, Max H. Allardt, lived in Germany from 1870-1875 where he published a periodical and a pamphlet extolling the wonders of Michigan. In 1881, successor commissioner Colonel Frederick Morley of Detroit distributed more than 40,000 copies of a lengthy publication in German, Dutch, French, and Swedish. The success of this program ultimately led to its own demise, for Governor Josiah W. Begole abolished the position of commissioner in 1885 as a result of the concern that immigrants were taking too many jobs. Programs to promote immigration to the state were abandoned until 1913, when another act was passed providing for a commissioner in an effort to attract people not only from Europe and Canada, but also from other states.

Poor harvests and the failed revolution of 1848 were responsible for the exodus of more than 3 million Germans from Europe to the United States. The thousands who came to Michigan played a significant role in the development of the state, particularly in education, agriculture, lumbering, and mining. Much of the state's Germanic heritage, which included a conscious effort to preserve the language and traditions of the homeland, was erased with the outbreak and outcome of World War I. In Michigan, German-Americans were urged to anglicize their names and forbidden to speak or teach the German language.

Other ethnic groups that contributed to Michigan's development were the Canadians, both English-speaking and French-speaking, who were quickly assimilated into American society; the Irish, who settled statewide and became an important political force in the city of Detroit; and the Dutch, who settled between the Grand and Kalamazoo rivers and were instrumental in establishing the furniture industry of Grand Rapids and the fruit and celery-growing industries of southwestern Michigan. In the Upper Peninsula, Cornish miners and a steady stream of Finns, Swedes, Norwegians, and Italians, who came after the Civil War, provided the human labor necessary to support the area's mining and lumbering enterprises.

By the turn of the century, a new wave of immigrants was pouring into the country and state. Unlike their predecessors, these immigrants were from southern and eastern Europe, particularly Poland, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and the Balkan States. These people were eager to reap the benefits of the American dream. The announcement by Henry Ford on January 5, 1914, that the Ford Motor Company would pay \$5 for a day's work attracted many immigrants to Michigan and enticed residents of rural Michigan to migrate to urban areas to take advantage of job opportunities.

Between 1910 and 1930, Michigan was one of the fastest-growing states in the nation. This growth, which occurred mostly in southern Michigan, especially in the auto boom counties of Wayne, Oakland, and Genesee, expedited the state's transformation from rural-agrarian to urbanindustrial. When the influx of immigrants was restricted by Congress in 1924, the state's industrial base began attracting workers from the South. While all major industrial centers continued to experience population growth, the city of Detroit was the chief destination for migrating southerners.

The Progressive Era

At the turn of the century, the forces of industrialization and dramatic population growth, together with urbanization and immigration, were forging a much different socioeconomic climate in Michigan. The lands of the northern Lower Peninsula and eastern Upper Peninsula had been stripped of pine and many lumber boomtowns had died out. The state's economy underwent a transformation from an extractive or resource-exploiting economy to a processing or industrial

Between 1850 and 1900, the state population increased by over 600%, from 396,654 to 2,410,982. In addition, by 1900, nearly 40% of the state's population lived in urban areas. With increasing urbanization and industrialization came urban concerns, such as police and fire protection, water supply and sewage disposal, public health, and transportation.

This era gave rise to the **Progressive movement**, a national campaign for extensive economic, political, and social reforms manifested in different ways throughout the state and nation. Among the governmental reforms that characterized this movement were women's suffrage, primary elections, local home rule, the direct election of United States senators, and the initiative and referendum. Progressives also advocated measures, such as antitrust laws and railroad rate controls, that were designed to curb what they perceived to be big business's disregard for the public welfare. The agenda for social reform included labor safety and child labor laws, workers' disability compensation, and prohibition.

Virtually all of these reforms were considered and adopted in some form in Michigan, Hazen S. Pingree, a successful businessman who became mayor of Detroit and then governor of Michigan from 1897 to 1900, advocated many of these reforms, but was not successful in securing their adoption. Several of his gubernatorial successors, including Fred M. Warner (1905-1910), Chase S. Osborn (1911-1912), and Woodbridge N. Ferris (1913-1916), were responsible for achieving that success. During this period, Michigan revised its constitution. Though the **Constitution of 1908** was largely a reorganization of its 1850 predecessor, it did offer substantive changes that altered the relationship between state and local government. It had been the responsibility of the Legislature to both provide and amend the charters of local units with local legislation. The new constitution required the Legislature to enact statutes affording local units home rule powers and curbed the use of local legislation. Advocates of direct democracy, the initiative and the referendum, were initially disappointed by the limited form adopted in the new constitution. However, they were successful in expanding that power through an amendment adopted in 1913. Other reforms, such as the direct primary and workers' disability compensation, were also eventually adopted.

While the temperance movement in Michigan first surfaced in the mid-nineteenth century, support waned until the early twentieth century. In 1916, spurred by the efforts of such organizations as the Anti-Saloon League, the electorate approved a **prohibition amendment** to the state constitution by a substantial margin. Michigan thereby became officially "dry" more than a year before the controversial prohibition amendment to the U.S. Constitution was adopted. This prohibition experiment proved as unpopular in Michigan as it was elsewhere. With the escalating crime rates associated with the smuggling of liquor (Michigan's border with Canada was the entryway for much of the country's illicit spirits) and the financial crisis brought about by the Great Depression, support for legalizing liquor grew steadily. In 1932, Michigan voters repealed the state prohibition amendment, and on April 10, 1933, a state convention ratified the Twenty-First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ultimately ending prohibition on the national level.

Women's rights advocates had lobbied for women's suffrage in Michigan for many years. By 1867, taxpaying women were permitted to vote in school elections. The issue of women's suffrage was debated extensively during the Constitutional Convention of 1907-1908, and the Constitution of 1908 granted taxpaying women the right to vote on questions involving the expenditure of



Women's suffrage movement in Michigan.

public money. In 1912, a proposed constitutional amendment extending full voting rights to women was defeated by a narrow margin. The next year, another women's suffrage amendment was submitted to the voters, who once again rejected the proposal, this time by a substantial margin. The voters approved an amendment to the state constitution in 1918 granting women voting rights in all Michigan elections. When the Legislature ratified the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on June 10, 1919, women were accorded full voting rights in all elections.

By the 1920s, Michigan's state governmental structure had evolved into a loose conglomeration of agencies, boards, and commissions, many of which were created to address the various problems associated with an emerging urban/industrial society and were independent of gubernatorial control. Elected in 1920 and returned to office for two additional terms, Governor Alex J. Groesbeck (1921-1926) successfully streamlined and consolidated the executive branch of government. At his urging, the Legislature enacted a statute creating the State Administrative Board to set administrative policy. Among the important administrative reforms implemented was the merging of thirty-three boards and agencies into five new departments — Agriculture, Conservation, Labor, Public Safety, and Welfare.